GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
LAW AND JUSTICE
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1697
ANSWERED ON:09.03.2007
VOTERS IDENTITY CARDS
Scindia Shri Jyotiraditya Madhavrao

Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether voter identity cards could not be made available to 30 percent voters despite launching a nationwide drive;

(b) if so, the reasons therefore;

(c) whether faulty voter I-Card are being issued in large number; and

(d) if so, the steps taken/being taken by the Government in this regard?

Answer

MINISTER OF THE STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI H.R. BHARDWAJ)

(a) to (d): A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (d) OF THE LOK SABHA UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.1697 FOR 9TH MARCH, 2007.

(a) and (b): The Election Commission has intimated that approximately 30% electors are yet to be issued voter identity cards. It has been the endeavour of the Commission to achieve 100% coverage under the Elector's Photo Identity Card (EPIC) scheme, as far as practicable, in a time-bound manner. Even though efforts have been constantly made to cover all the electors under the EPIC scheme, natural calamities, engagement of administrative machinery, which also attend to works other than election work, apathy of voters themselves are some of the reasons as to why the progress has been uneven. While in some States/Union territories such as Kerala, Punjab, West Bengal, Lakshadweep and Puducherry the EPIC card percentage is above 90%, the EPIC programme has not actually taken place due to various reasons in Assam and Manipur.

The Commission is also concerned about the fact that said 30% gap in issuance of EPIC is continuing despite annual EPIC campaigns being undertaken. Factors that contribute to this gap are: (1) persons who attain eligibility first time are registered every year which may be about 2 per cent; (2) non-deletion of names of deceased electors that may be about 1 per cent and (3) intercity and intra-city migration in major metropolitan towns which may be about to 7-8 per cent. The Commission has also noted that the migrating electors in most cases do not mention their EPIC numbers, if any, issued at the places of their previous residence in the application form filed for inclusion of their names at their new places of residence. Therefore, though their names are included in the electoral rolls where the electors shift, the EPIC numbers remain unfilled and this increases the number of the electors having no EPIC.

The Election Commission has further noticed that a lot of seasonal migration of skilled and unskilled persons takes place from the backward areas of the States, like, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, etc. to the other parts of the country but their names are not deleted from the voters' list at the place of origin as their family members residing at the original place want their names to continue for emotional and more mundane (to prevent property disputes, etc.) reasons. As such, persons are not available for photography; EPICs cannot be issued and the gap remains uncovered.

Further, in urban areas where other photograph-based identity documents (like Passports, Driving licences, Departmental or Employer-given IDs) are available, the urbanites do not show any enthusiasm for obtaining EPICs as it involves spending their time to go to a Photo location for a document which anyway has relevance for them once in 5 years only and for which they already have alternatives.

(c) and (d): Cases of issue of a large number of faulty Voter Identity Cards have not come to the notice of the Election Commission.

Though some cases do occur where particulars are mentioned wrongly, these cases are sent to the local officers for correction. The particulars of an elector printed on EPIC are taken from the electoral roll database by the software automatically for EPIC generation. The electoral rolls are published in draft at all polling station locations, area post offices, offices of the Assistant Electoral Registration Officers/Electoral Registration Officers, etc. inviting applications, among others, for corrections also. It has been seen that generally very few electors submit applications in Form 8 for correction of defects, if any, in their particulars that are printed in the draft roll. The general tendency is to point out the defects only after getting the EPIC. Opportunity is given even at the time of photography for preparation of EPIC to indicate defects in particulars of electors so that an EPIC with correct particulars can be issued.